

Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

NEWSLETTER



Issue #1

June 2002

The Manager's Message

As you may know, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument was established with a Presidential Proclamation on January 17, 2001. The proclamation recognizes the spectacular array of biological, geological and historical resources found on public lands in this area. The designation presents the public and us with an important opportunity to prepare a management plan to establish guidance, objectives and management actions for these lands and resources.

The proclamation also emphasizes that the BLM will remain the managing agency for these public lands. As the managing agency, we are responsible for seeking public input (scoping), then using that information throughout the planning process as we prepare a resource management plan and environmental impact statement for this monument.

Everyone in our organization (from the Lewistown Field Office to the Secretary of the Interior's Office) is listening to the public discussion about how to manage this monument. I recognize that some members of the public have concerns about potential changes in how these public lands are managed as a result of this designation. I believe these concerns can best be understood and resolved by a collaborative effort

among the public, elected officials and our local staff. The BLM is committed to working closely with all interested parties to identify the issues and to find the management options best suited to local, regional and national needs and concerns. It would be irresponsible for us to do anything less.

We will host 11 initial scoping open houses around north central Montana to help define the issues that will be addressed in the resource management plan. We will also host meetings in those same communities after preliminary alternatives have been developed, and after the draft resource management plan has been released for public comment. Our current schedule calls for the preliminary alternatives in June 2003, a draft plan to be released to the public for a 90-day comment period in July 2004, and a proposed final plan in May 2005.

We look forward to working with all the interests as we write a management plan for enhancing, enjoying and using these special public lands and resources.

Sincerely,

Gary Slagel, Monument Manager

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Scoping

Scoping is the first stage of the planning process and closely involves the public with identifying issues, providing resource and other information, and developing planning criteria to guide preparation of the resource management plan. It provides an important opportunity for both the public and BLM to discuss concerns, ideas and issues. The BLM is committed to providing stakeholders frequent and equal opportunities to participate in an open, inclusive and comprehensive scoping process.

In order to provide ample opportunities for public participation across north central Montana, the Lewistown Field Office has scheduled the following scoping open houses:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Location</i>
July 8	Winifred	Winifred High School Cafeteria
July 9	Lewistown	Lewistown Field Office Meeting Room
July 10	Big Sandy	High School Auditorium
July 11	Fort Benton	Agricultural Museum
July 15	Havre	Best Western Great Northern Motel
July 16	Chinook	Chinook Motor Inn
July 17	Cleveland	Cleveland Hunting Lodge
July 18	Malta	Malta High School
July 22	Hays	Hays Senior Center
August 5	Great Falls	BLM/U.S. Forest Service Office
August 6	Billings	Hampton Inn

Scoping Open House Format

Each open house will run from 4 to 7 p.m. and will feature an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists and displays to answer questions and provide information. There will also be a brief (10-15 minute) presentation around 4:30 p.m.

during each open house. However, the emphasis of these open houses is to encourage the public to move around the facility to discuss their concerns with the appropriate staff specialists. The BLM also hopes these open houses will encourage the public to provide their comments in a written form.

If You Can Not Attend

If you can not attend one or more of these open houses, there are several other means of participating. You can mail your written comments to us throughout the scoping process. We also anticipate receiving e-mail comments at monumentrmp@blm.gov.

How Soon Must You Comment

Your comments will be most useful if received by the end of August, 2002. However, we want everyone to know that we consider scoping to be an open process that does not end at the close of an open house. We will accept scoping comments anytime prior to releasing the draft resource management plan and we will work hard to include your substantive comments.

What Type of Comments Are Most Useful

Substantive comments that help define an issue or an alternative are most helpful. We will gladly accept all comments offered, however those that discuss specific values, numbers, criteria or provide resource or other types of information are most likely to help shape specific portions of this resource management plan.

Beyond The Scope Of This Plan

This resource management plan can not address concerns about the Antiquities Act of 1906, or where the monument boundary is located. Those are Congressional options and beyond the scope of what BLM can address.

Your Comments Are Public Information – *Unless*

All comments concerning this resource management plan and the names of those individuals who submit them are considered public information and by law, must be released if someone requests them. However, an individual may request his or her name and comments not be released to the public. This request must be in writing and included with all comments submitted.

Planning Schedule

It takes time to complete a good resource management plan (RMP). The physical work of gathering the data, involving the public, analyzing and incorporating public comments, and writing the RMP will be done by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists. While planning schedules are vulnerable to budgets and a variety of other priority workloads, we hope to be able to adhere to this schedule.

In 2002, we will:

- * publish a Notice of Intent to prepare an RMP in the Federal Register;
- * brief state, local and tribal governments about the planning process;
- * host public scoping open houses;
- * prepare a comment analysis summary of the scoping comments; and
- * prepare planning criteria for preparation of the resource management plan.

In 2003, we will:

- * collect data;
- * formulate alternatives;
- * host public open houses on alternative development;
- * provide a comment analysis summary of the public's alternative comments; and
- * begin writing the RMP.

In 2004, we will:

- * identify a preferred alternative;
- * issue a draft RMP and environmental impact statement (EIS);
- * provide a public comment period (90 days) on the draft RMP/EIS;
- * host public open houses on the draft RMP/EIS; and
- * provide a public comment analysis summary.

In 2005, we will:

- * select a final RMP/EIS;
- * issue a final RMP/EIS;
- * provide a protest period (30 days) on the final RMP/EIS;
- * provide a Governor's consistency review (60 days) on the final RMP/EIS; and
- * issue a Record of Decision.

Issues Your Peers Have Identified So Far

We've been listening to what the stakeholders have been saying about this designation. So far, your peers have conveyed these issues to BLM; what other issues do you feel strongly about?

- * How will human activities (recreation, off highway vehicle use, livestock grazing and oil and gas exploration and development) be managed?
- * What facilities and infrastructure are appropriate to provide visitor interpretation and administration of the monument?
- * How will BLM manage biological, historical, cultural and visual values in the monument?
- * How will monument management be integrated with other agency and community plans?
- * How will transportation and access be managed?

What other issues are you concerned about?

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